

HANDLING PEER PRESSURE



STANDARDS ADDRESSED

Objectives

Students will understand and identify examples of positive and negative peer pressure.

Students will develop strategies to help prevent them from giving in to negative peer pressure.

Materials Needed

- Board or butchers paper and markers (“We Do”)
- “Peer Pressure Scenarios List” activity sheet (“We Do” and “You Do”)

Starter (10 minutes)

Begin by asking students how they would feel going to school all year, giving up summer vacation. After students respond, ask them, "What if this idea was popular and other students were trying to get you to change your mind? Would you?" Allow students time to respond.

Point out to students that even though the idea may have been popular with others, that did not change how they personally felt about it. Explain that they just went against peer pressure. Define peer pressure by saying, "The decisions you make help determine the type of person you will become. Whether something is popular and other people are doing it should not be the deciding force in your life. It is important to avoid the pressure to do things that you may not feel comfortable doing."

Teacher Presented Knowledge/I Do (10 minutes)

Tell students that you are going to list ways to avoid negative peer pressure. Review each strategy so every student understands what it means and what it looks like in their life:

1. Say "no" in an assertive way and show others that you mean what you say. If you appear confident, people won't be so eager to try to influence you.
2. Be kind and turn the situation into a more positive one. If you are trying to go against what others are doing or saying, give an example as to why you feel the way you do.
3. Be repetitive. Do not change your mind. Make how you feel clear by repeating yourself if you need to. If you practice saying "no" around people you trust, then you will feel more confident in saying it when you're feeling peer pressure.
4. Walk away. If you can, walk away from whatever is making you feel pressured.
5. Turn to a trusted friend or friends for help. If you have friends who you know will stand by your side and stick up for you, allow them to help you stay confident in how you feel.
6. Find help from a trusted mentor or adult. If the situation is serious and you don't think you can handle the pressure alone, talk to a trusted adult, like a parent or teacher, about what you're going through.
7. Speak up if you see peers trying to pressure others. If you aren't feeling pressured, but you know someone else is, it is likely they could use a friend and a confident supporter.
8. Check your friendships. Ask yourself if the people you hang out with are good or bad influences on your life. If you feel like they pressure you instead of making you confident in who you are, then you need to decide if they are truly good friends.
9. Make new friends. If you think your friends are not good people to keep around, then find people who respect you and share the same values and interests as you. You will be happier with these people as friends!

Guided Student Practice/We Do (20 minutes)

Inform students that peer pressure can be classified into two categories: verbal peer pressure and nonverbal peer pressure. Tell students that verbal peer pressure is pressure from friends that results from spoken words. It happens when someone says something to a person that directly puts pressure on them. Verbal pressure can include threats, mockery, or insults. Nonverbal peer pressure is pressure from friends that results from unspoken words. It happens indirectly. Nothing is said to a person, but when a person sees others doing it, the person feels the pressure to do it, too. Nonverbal pressure includes the stare down, fitting in with the crowd, and the cold shoulder.

On butchers paper or a board, create a T-chart with one side labeled “Verbal Peer Pressure,” and the other side labeled “Nonverbal Peer Pressure,” and ask students to provide examples of each. Tell students that while peer pressure is mostly viewed as negative, sometimes your friends’ influence can be a good thing; they may stop you from doing something that you may later regret, or they may encourage you to do something you were nervous about. Both verbal and nonverbal peer pressure can influence a person to make a choice or decision that can either be good or bad.

Next, ask for student volunteers to role-play a peer pressure scenario. (*Choose from the “Peer Pressure Scenarios List” activity sheet provided with this lesson or generate your own scenario.*)

Role-play the scenario and then discuss using these question prompts:

1. Was this peer pressure? How do you know?
2. Was this pressure positive or negative?
3. Was the pressure verbal or nonverbal?
4. In the future, what can be done to resist this type of peer pressure?

Student Independent Practice/You Do (30 minutes)

Direct students to work in groups to plan and act out various peer pressure scenarios (*use the “Peer Pressure Scenarios List” activity sheet for scenarios*). Inform groups that they can decide if the main character will give in to the peer pressure or will resist the peer pressure in their scenario. Hold a discussion after each group presents their scenario to the class. Ask the following questions to prompt discussion: What type of peer pressure was represented in this scenario, verbal or nonverbal? Did the character give in to the peer pressure or resist the peer pressure? If the main character did give in to the peer pressure, what do you think the consequence(s) could be? In the future, what can be done to resist this type of pressure?

After scenarios are acted out and discussed, have students write a reflection about peer pressure. Students may write about what they learned from today’s lesson or reflect on a time when they experienced peer pressure.

Closure (5 minutes)

Say to students, “At one time or another, you will experience peer pressure. It is important that you are aware that it can be verbal or nonverbal. Peer pressure can also be positive and negative. Being aware of the different types of negative peer pressure is a great way to start resisting them.”

Student Assessment

1. What are examples of verbal and nonverbal peer pressure?
2. What are two ways you can resist peer pressure?
3. Which of your personal values and beliefs would you refuse to change or give up, even if you felt pressure from another person to do so?

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Art Extension

Read the story *One*, by Kathryn Otoshi. This story is about a blue circle named One who longs to be like other colours. Students can use primary and secondary colours to create paintings about positive or negative peer pressure. Allow the colours of the paintings to dictate the type of peer pressure.

Art Extension

Students can create slogans, bumper stickers, billboard signs, or license plates about peer pressure.

Drama Extension

Play charades using common peer pressure sayings such as “loser” or “I dare you.”

English Extension

Imagine you have a pen pal asking for advice on dealing with peer pressure. What would you write?

English Extension

A chapter book for an extension *Bully on the Bus* by Kathryn Apel or a picture book *Stanley Paste* by Aaron Blabey. Both explore how to navigate interactions with negative peers and strategies on how to come out on the other side.

HASS Extension

Explain to the class that they are going to start a class- and/or school-wide campaign to end negative peer pressure. Students will work in small groups to come up with a slogan, hashtag, or mantra that will remind students to stand up to negative peer pressure. Remind students to be creative and original, and provide students with supplies to create posters. Encourage students to create pictures that correlate with their slogans, hashtags, or mantras. Inform students that the goal of their posters is to convince their peers to not give in to peer pressure! Once the students have had time to create their posters, have the groups present theirs to the class.

PEER PRESSURE SCENARIOS LIST

1. You and a group of friends are playing soccer on a field near your house. You have been told to be home by dark. Just before dark, a popular kid in the neighbourhood invites you and your group of friends to go to his house to play night tag in his backyard. All of your friends decide to go, but you know you are expected to be home at dark.
2. During computer class, one of your classmates went to a website that you know you are not allowed to be on at school. She wants you to go to the website as well so that she can show you a “cool” video. Your classmate says you are a teacher’s pet if you follow school rules all the time.
3. Geraldo really wants a pair of soccer cleats. His grandma drops him off at a local shopping centre and gives him money to go inside and buy the shoes. As he is walking toward the shoe department, he notices a group of soccer players wearing the same pair of soccer shorts. Although he has been wanting the soccer cleats for a long time, Geraldo also feels pressured to be cool and fit in with the other soccer players.
4. On the bus ride to school, a classmate asks Naquan if he can copy his homework. Naquan wants to say no because he knows that is cheating. But his classmate tells him, “Only nerds refuse to share answers. Do you want to be called a nerd?”
5. When DeAnna is at a school dance, the new girl at her school tries to come up and join her friends’ dance circle. All of DeAnna’s friends roll their eyes and move around so that they block the new girl out. DeAnna notices that the new girl looks really lonely but doesn’t want to appear “uncool” to her friends.
6. Rachel was sitting quietly in class, reading a book like her teacher instructed her to do. Suddenly, her best friend sitting beside her asks her to pass a note down to another student. Rachel is nervous about getting into trouble, but Leilani threatens to not be her best friend anymore if she doesn’t pass the note.